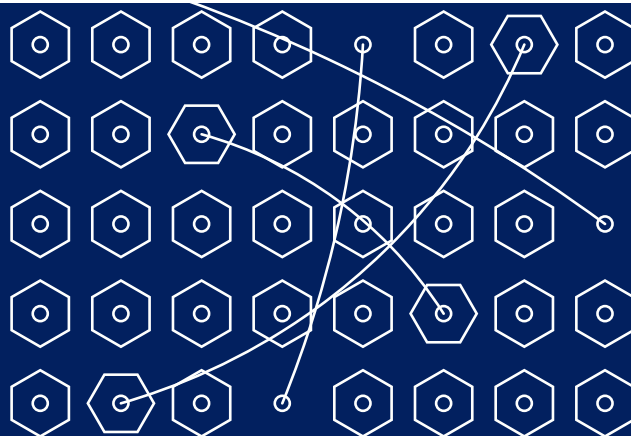




Challenges and Solution in Combating Corruption in Gambia

A Public-Private Integrity brief number 103 by: Michael Oko Davies, Executive Director

Nearly all political parties and public officials in The Gambia have detailed different measures to combat corruption in their recent public statements, as well as in policy creation and implementation.

The goal is to implement robust anti-corruption measures and enhance digital governance initiatives to reduce fraudulent activities in receipts and deposits transactions, ultimately reducing instances of corruption.

The focus has been on reaching anti-corruption goals by addressing the disruption of corruption networks, particularly within the public sector and Commercial State Owned Enterprises. For example, challenges arise in ensuring transparency in financial management and enforcing the Access to Information Act to ensure public access to information. This is highlighted by the limited access to documents stored in various libraries in The Gambia, which makes information retrieval vulnerable to extortion or the requirement to bribe librarians.

In 2017, The Gambia began investigations and forensic audits to uncover corrupt practices and scandals that took place during the APRC government's time in office. These involved fraudulent financial transactions. But the current government's lack of adherence to globally acknowledged anti-corruption standards is a cause for concern. Moreover, the excessive gifting of valuable items to individuals associated with those in power has raised worries. This practice hampers the ability to detect, prevent, and punish economic wrongdoing. Recognizing corruption therefore, as a criminal offense is a necessary step that has been delayed for too long.

In the last thirty years, numerous public sector reforms have aimed to improve public institutions and increase their effectiveness. However, efforts to prevent corruption and

recover stolen assets in the public sector have remained insufficient due to a lack of political commitment, human resources, and funding for optimal functioning. This has resulted in challenges in enhancing public sector accountability, including difficulties in enforcing anti-corruption laws, hindering progress in areas like Transitional Justice and engagement with Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). These problems arise from ineffective policy implementation and the mismanagement of national resources.

The Gambia is focusing on institutional reforms and enhancing transparency to address corruption and strengthen democratic credibility. Nevertheless, the lack of operational institutions is impeding progress. For example, crucial entities such as the national assembly website do not adequately facilitate public access to downloadable information. Valid concerns exist about the efficacy of anti-corruption efforts and democratic standing in Gambia. The effectiveness of these endeavors greatly depends on the commitment of public officials to enforce the established measures and the involvement of an informed public in governance.

Well-thought-out policies, even if meticulously designed, may face obstacles if public officials do not fully dedicate themselves to carrying them out. In Gambia, governmental institutions frequently lack the necessary resources and structures to effectively fulfill their responsibilities. This insufficiency significantly contributes to the difficulties in policy implementation and the prevalence of corruption in public offices and Commercial State Owned Enterprises.

In Gambia, residents commonly believe that a lack of trust in the system results in diminished backing for anti-corruption efforts and the formation of democratic legitimacy. Additionally, cultural norms, such as the endorsement of "gifts" as outlined in the existing constitution, inadvertently encourage corrupt behaviors, presenting obstacles to combating corruption in various governance areas in Gambia.

In the future, effective solutions should focus on organizing and coordinating government agencies responsible for combating corruption. This includes entities like NHRC, Access to Information Commission, Anti-Corruption Commission, SOE Oversight Commission, and Financial Intelligence Unit, ensuring they operate independently to accomplish their objectives.



About Public-Private Integrity

A prestigious civil society organization committed to implementation of anti-corruption measures in both the public and private sectors. The organization holds Observer Status (#300) with the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights and has been granted Special Consultative Status with UN ECOSOC since 2011.

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